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NSC FOR MGAVIN
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TAGS: PGOV PREL KPKO SOCI ASEC AU UNSC SU CD
SUBJECT: UNAMID LEADERSHIP WARY OF JEM'S RISE

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Justice and Equality Movement's (JEM) Doha-talks monopoly has created a peace process that guarantees war, as JEM seeks to destroy or co-opt all rival factions, UNAMID JSR Rodolphe Adada and Political Affairs Chief Abdul Mohammed told CDA Fernandez on May 13. They noted that if not checked, JEM would expect to be crowned as Darfur's ruling elite, eliminating any chance that elections might take place. They argued for the revival of the 2005 Declaration of Principles (DoP) signed by JEM, SLA/M, and the GOS, which affirmed commitments to democracy and political pluralism. They also told the CDA that Sudanese expatriate telecom magnate Mo Ibrahim and his representatives were in frequent contact for weeks with senior GOS officials about his planned "Mandate Darfur" conference in Addis. 1 The GOS pulled the plug on the conference at the last minute, apparently at the behest of Darfuri Arab tribal leaders who have been regaining influence with the regime. Mohammed also maintained that aside from the ceremonial aspects, the conference had been poorly planned, with a weak agenda and little substance. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Adada stated that the opportunity to take advantage of the lull in fighting was fleeting as a result of JEM's incursion into North Darfur. He noted that JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim's goal over the next one to two months is to absorb or otherwise destroy all other rebel movements. Since Minni Minnawi "will never give in to JEM," more fighting in North Darfur is inevitable, according to Adada. He mused that JEM could be reined in by a counterweight among other rebel groups, and advocated re-forging ties between SLA/Minnawi and SLA/Abdul Wahid. CDA noted that while a personal rapprochement between Minnawi and Abdul Wahid is possible, it would be much more difficult to integrate their forces on the ground. Speaking of Abdul Wahid, Adada noted that Suleiman Marjan, a Maidob SLA/AW commander based in far North Darfur (outside SLA/AW's mountainous stronghold of Jebel Marra), was then in Nairobi. Marjan was seeking help to travel to Paris to meet with Abdul Wahid and convince him to engage constructively in the peace process, Adada said, and he urged that the USG provide assistance. CDA agreed this is a worthwhile idea and agreed to explore the issue. (Note: Poloff spoke with Suleiman Marjan shortly thereafter, who reiterated his request for travel assistance to see Abdul Wahid. Marjan is now in Kampala. End Note.)

¶3. (SBU) UNAMID Political Affairs Chief Abdul Mohamed stated that if JEM's monopoly on peace talks continues, JEM will continue to try and absorb rivals by force or co-optation. "We've created a peace-process formula that necessitates war," he lamented. If left unchecked and without a counterbalance, JEM's negotiating strategy will be to try to emulate the CPA model by seeking both senior positions in the GNU in Khartoum and control of a part of Sudan, in this case Darfur (and possibly Southern Kordofan.) This has significant implications for the democratic process, he said, because "if you go down this road with JEM, you can forget about elections." This in turn puts JEM in direct conflict with Abdul Wahid and the ethnic Fur, because "Abdul Wahid's involvement in the

peace process is predicated on elections being the final result." Mohammed asserted that the only realistic way of checking JEM's ambitions is to return to the Declaration of Principles (DoP) it signed along with the GOS and SLA/M in Abuja on July 5, 2005, which affirmed their commitment to democracy and political pluralism. "Ignoring the DoP is how the current peace process got derailed," said Mohammed. He urged that SE Gration revisit this document and work in tune with the JMST to resurrect it.

¶4. (SBU) Adada and Mohamed expressed concern that JEM's rise could put it in direct conflict with Darfur's other power centers, the Fur and the Arab tribes. "The next big war is a Fur and Arab war against the Zaghawa," predicted Mohamed. Adada added that what happened in Gereida locality in South Darfur, which was emptied of Zaghawa when non-Zaghawa tribes reasserted control of these areas following the fighting between JEM and SLA/Minnawi in January, is a microcosm of what the future could hold, though he predicted it would be much worse. "The stability of Darfur depends on these three tribes," he said. Mohamed also noted that Darfuri Arab tribal leaders such as Safi Al Nur and Musa Hilal, once marginalized in Khartoum, are again gaining influence with the regime. "[Assistant to the President] Nafie will not take any decisions on Darfur without consulting these leaders," he asserted.

¶5. (SBU) Adada and Mohamed also addressed the search for an elusive avenue for Darfuri civil society to imprint its views on the peace process. The cancellation of the recent "Mandate Darfur" conference, allegedly because the GOS refused to allow invitees to travel from Darfur to Addis Ababa to take part, means that the search for a civil society initiative must continue, they said. Mohammed said the conference's organizer, Sudanese expatriate telecom magnate Mo Ibrahim, had raised the suspicions of the GOS

KHARTOUM 00000651 002 OF 002

elite. "They would have preferred the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC) or JMST organize something like this—not a Sudanese living abroad," he said, noting that Ibrahim was perceived by some in the regime as a tool of the West. Mohamed further stated that the GOS decision to derail the conference came after several weeks of discussions with Ibrahim and his representatives. "It was a last minute decision," he said, which apparently resulted following Nafie's consultations with the aforementioned Arab tribal leaders who were unhappy with the participant list.

¶6. (SBU) Mohammed also alleged that for all the money Mo Ibrahim had invested in the initiative, the conference was poorly planned, with a lack of preparations for anything beyond the ceremonial aspects. "The agenda was very weak, with little thought going into the substance of the workshops and the desired outcomes," he said, noting that Tijane Sese called him only a few days before the event was to take place to help produce an outline. (Note: Abdul Mohammed rarely misses an opportunity to criticize any initiative in which he is not prominently involved. End Note.)

¶7. (SBU) Comment: We agree with some of what JSR Adada said; for example, JEM has been attacking Minni Minnawi's positions in North Darfur with ever greater aggression over the last week, and we expect this to continue or increase over the next week, with a greater number of GOS bombing raids against JEM's new positions. However, we do not expect JEM to attack SLA/AW positions in Jebel Marra. JEM cannot control Jebel Marra, for one thing, but also cannot afford to generate ill-will among the Fur if JEM's Khalil Ibrahim hopes to become the leading rebel figure in Darfur. The chances of a viable rebel counterweight to JEM appear slim, as none of the other movements--SLA/Minnawi, SLA/Abdul Wahid, the "Tripoli Group" and other bit players--has the military strength, capacity, vision or political will to mount a challenge to JEM's primacy. They also lack a patron to provide them with military, logistical and financial support. The primary danger of a bilateral peace agreement signed with JEM is the tension this would cause with the Fur and Arab communities. A ceasefire with JEM would be highly beneficial in advancing an improvement in Chad-Sudan relations, since Sudan would no longer have a pretext to support Chadian rebels. However, a broader peace agreement will require buy-in from Arab and Fur tribal groups.

ASQUINO